

THE STORY OF CHATTA

An Incident in the Life of the Lord Buddha

(Translated from the Pāli)

• BY

C. JINARĀJADĀSA, M.A.

ST. JOHN'S COLL., CAMB.



THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

ADYAR, MADRAS, INDIA

1915

Sold by
The Theosophical Press
Wheaton, Illinois

THE STORY OF CHATTA ¹

WHEN the Lord was dwelling in the Jeta Grove at Sāvatti, there lived at Setavya a lad named Chatta, the son of a certain Brahman who had long been childless. When he grew to school going age, he was sent to the town of Ukkatṭha by his parents to be with Pokkharasāti, a Brahman instructor. As he was clever and diligent, he very quickly mastered the Vedas and the Sciences, and became accomplished in the culture of the Brahmans.

Then with obeisance he thus addressed his teacher: "I have learnt from you the sciences; what shall be my teacher's fee to you?"

¹ Translated from the Pāli. The verses alone, without the narrative part, appear in that section of the Buddhist Canon known as the *Vimāna Vatthu* of the *Khuddhaka Nikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*; the verses, with the story of their composition, appear in the commentary of *Dhammapāla* called *Paramattha Dipanī*. My translation is directly from *Dhammapāla's* commentary.

“The teacher’s fee is in accordance with the means of the pupil; bring me a thousand pieces of gold.”

Chatta then bade good-bye to his teacher, and returned to Setavya to his parents. They welcomed him with delight. After due salutations, he mentioned the matter to them and said:

“Will you give me what is fitting? I can return at once to-day.”

His father and mother replied:

“Dearest, it is not lucky to travel to-day; do not go till to-morrow.”

Then they collected the gold pieces, and put them in a bag and gave them to him.

Now certain robbers heard of this matter, and hid themselves in the glade of a forest through which Chatta had to go. “For,” said they, “we will kill the boy and take the gold.”

Now the Lord at dawn after radiating His great compassion on men, examined the world, and saw that if Chatta could be established in the Refuges and in the Morality,¹ he would

¹ These are fully explained later on in the story. The Refuges are Buddha, His Truth, and His Brotherhood; the Morality is the Five Precepts for the laity.

then immediately enter heaven when killed by the robbers; and that further if he were to return with his Deva-mansion,¹ he could establish in the Truth the assembly to whom he appeared. So the Lord went in advance and sat down at the foot of a tree on the road that Chatta would take.

The boy, when he had received the present for his teacher, left Setavya and took the road to Ukkaṭṭha; and on the way thither he saw the Lord seated. He came near and stood on one side.

“Whither art thou going?” said the Lord.

“O Gotama, I am going to Ukkaṭṭha to give the teacher’s fee to Pokkharasāti,” replied Chatta.

Then the Lord, “Son, dost thou know the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts?”

“No, Lord; what are they and what is their use?”

“They are these,” said the Lord; and He explained to him the “Entrance to the Refuges” and the “Practice of the Morality.” He then said:

¹ This Deva-mansion is in Pāli “vimāna.” Presumably it is the aura of a Deva, as it is said to extend for miles, and he travels with it.

“Son, learn now first how to enter the Refuges.”

“Lord, I will learn them well, teach me,” said Chatta.

Thus prayed by the boy, the Lord recited, in poetic form to suit the boy's inclination, these verses¹ that describe the way of entering the Refuges :

The Supreme Teacher of teachers among men is the Lord, the Sage of the Sākya; He has achieved perfection and attained Nirvāṇa, and is full of strength and energy.

To Him, the Blessed One, go thou for Refuge.

The Truth brings freedom from passion, desire and sorrow; it is self-begotten, inviting, sweet, plain and logical.

To the Truth go thou for Refuge.

¹ I give below these three verses in the original Pāli, since they are so well known among Buddhist children. The only difference between them translated as above, and as they are chanted by children, is in one word, the last word of each verse; the Lord says “upehi”—go thou; the children sing, as below, “upemi”—I go.

Yo vadataṃ pavaro manujesu,
Sākyamuniṃ Bhagavā katakicco,
Pāragato balaviriyasamaṅgī,
Taṃ Sugataṃ saraṇattham upemi.

Rāgavirāgam anejam asokaṃ,
Dhammam asaṅkhatam appaṭikūlaṃ,
Madhuraṃ imaṃ paṇaṃ suvibhattaṃ,
Dhammam imaṃ saraṇattham upemi.

Yattha ca dinnāṃ mahapphalaṃ āhu,
Catusu sucīsu purisayugesu,
Attha ca puggala dhammadasā te,
Saṅgham imaṃ saraṇattham upemi.

Four Grades there are of the Holy Ones, and Eight Ranks they make¹; service to them verily brings great reward.

Go thou to the Brotherhood for Refuge.

The Lord taught with these three verses the Attributes of the Refuges and the Modes of Entering the Refuges; and immediately afterwards the boy repeated those verses, "The Supreme Teacher of teachers" and what follows, to show that he had firmly grasped them. In the same manner he repeated what was told him concerning the Five Precepts, the nature of each and its consequence; with understanding he "took the Precepts" in due form.

With swift realisation and with gladdened mind, "And now, Lord, I shall depart," he said. He then proceeded on his way, recalling the virtues of the Three Gems.²

¹ The Lord proclaimed that His Saṅgha—the Brotherhood of Disciples—is composed of only those who are "on the Path." All other Buddhists are the laity.

Those who are on the Path are in four Grades, and according to his Grade a Disciple of the Lord is either, 1. *Āraṇya*-āpatti, "who has entered the Stream," 2. *Sakṛidāgāmi*, "who returns to birth but once," 3. *Anāgāmi*, "who does not return to birth," or 4. *Arahat*, "the venerable." The members of each Grade are further subdivided into two Ranks, the first, of those who have just entered a Grade and are at its "magga" or commencement, and the second, of those who have come to its "phala" or fruition, and so are ready to pass on to the next Grade.

² The Buddha, His Truth, and His Brotherhood.

The Lord then returned to the Jeta Grove, saying, "Sufficient is the powerful merit of this to give him birth in the Deva World."

Now the boy determined that he would obtain the virtues of the Three Gems, and he established himself in the Refuges as taught by the Lord. As then he went on his way rejoicing, and repeating, "I go for refuge," he was set upon by the robbers; he was quite unaware of their presence, for he was wrapt up in the thought of the virtues of the Three Gems. One of the robbers slipped out of a bush, and swiftly let fly a poisoned arrow and killed him. Then picking up the bag of gold, he went away with his fellows.

The boy, the moment he was dead, was born in the Tāvātimsa heaven with a Deva-mansion of thirty *yojanas*¹; its splendour further extended to twenty *yojanas* more.

Now when the dwellers near by Setavya saw that the boy was dead, they hastened to Setavya and broke the news to his father and mother; and dwellers near Ukkatṭha went to Ukkatṭha and told the Brahman Pokkharasāti. At the news, the father and mother and relations

¹ A *yojana* is about twelve miles.

and friends, and Pokkharasāti, and their attendants arrived at the scene, lamenting with streaming faces; there also gathered in great numbers the inhabitants of Setavya, Ukkatṭha and Icchāmaṅgala, and they all made a great gathering. The boy's parents then made a funeral pyre near the roadside and began the ceremonies for the dead.

Then the Lord thus thought: "The boy Chatta will come to pay reverence to me, if I go there; I shall make him describe all that happened and demonstrate the result of Karma; so I shall proclaim the Truth, and a multitude will comprehend what It is." So thinking, He went to the place, accompanied by a large number of His disciples, and sat down at the foot of a tree, flashing out the six colours of the Buddha rays.¹

Now Chatta looked at his own beatitude, and sought for its cause; he saw that it was due to Entering the Refuges and Taking the Precepts. Filled with delight and full of

¹ These are the colours in the aura of the Lord, which extended to some three miles; many seeing the colours in the air knew the Lord was near. The colours are arranged in concentric spheres, and are blue, yellow, rose, white, golden orange, and "gleaming"; the last, the colour of the outermost sphere, is made up of the five colours in succession.

reverence for the Lord, he thought in gratitude, "Indeed I will go and worship the Lord and His disciples, and I will proclaim to the assembly the virtues of the Three Gems." So he came with his Deva-mansion, and lit up with radiance the whole country round; stepping then out of his mansion in a glory, he revealed himself. He approached the Lord and prostrated at His feet in worship; then raising his hands to his forehead, stood on one side.

When the assembly saw him, they exclaimed in amazement, "Who is this? Is he a Deva, or Brahmā himself?" and came up to the Lord and gathered round Him. The Lord thereupon addressed the angel¹ as follows, in order to make manifest the result of a meritorious Karma:

Nor shines with such splendour the sun in the sky, nor the moon, nor Phussa,² as shines this thy incomparable radiance. Why hast thou come from heaven to earth?

Twenty yojanas and more spreads the radiance of thy mansion, immaculate, pure, and beautiful; it surpasses the sun's rays and makes night to day.

¹ Chatta in his Deva-body.

² A star in Cancer, whose light is said to persist for ever.

Myriads of lotuses, white and red, and flowers of many a hue adorn it; roofed over with beauteous nets of gold, it shines in the sky even as the sun.

As thickly move the stars in the sky, so move there slender goddesses in crimson robes and golden veils bedecked, with complexions like unto gold, and scented with perfumes of sandal, piṅgala and aloes.

There gods and goddesses move, many-hued and innumerable, clad in gold, with golden ornaments adorned; joyful they are, and decked in garlands that scatter scent as the breezes move them.

How hast thou come to possess such an abode? What was thy purification that brought thee this fruit of Karma? Speak, son, and answer.

The angel replied in these verses:

The Lord met a boy here by the roadside, and in His compassion gave him instruction; "I will obey," said Chatta, when he heard the teaching concerning Thy noble Gems.

"I take Refuge in the Mighty Conqueror, in His Truth, and in His Disciples."—I know them not, I said, when at first questioned; but after, I followed the teaching Thou gavest then, Lord.¹

"Take thou not life in any way whatsoever; a sin it is, and the wise praise not heedlessness to

¹ The words of the Lord in this and the five following verses constitute the simple ceremony known in Buddhism as "Entering the Refuges and Taking the Precepts." The form of the words is slightly changed; the first verse is amplified into three phrases, "I take my refuge in Buddha, I take my refuge in the Truth, I take my refuge in the Brotherhood"; the Five Precepts are not, as here, commandments of the Lord, but promises the layman makes to himself—"I take the Precept to abstain from taking life," etc.

creatures.”—I know it not, I said, when at first questioned ; but after, I followed the teaching Thou gavest then, Lord.

“*Think thou not to take what is not given thee and is possessed by another.*”—I know it not, I said, when at first questioned ; but after, I followed the teaching Thou gavest then, Lord.

“*Go thou not to another’s wife, that is under his protection ; that is a dishonour.*”—I know it not, I said, when at first questioned ; but after, I followed the teaching Thou gavest then, Lord.

“*Speak thou not any falsehood whatsoever ; the wise praise not words that are untruthful.*”—I know it not, I said, when at first questioned ; but after, I followed the teaching Thou gavest then, Lord.

“*Abstain thou from all drink that robs a man of his mind.*”—I know it not, I said, when at first questioned ; but after, I followed the teaching Thou gavest then, Lord.

Thus I took the Five Precepts, and set my feet on the way of the Lord’s Truth. Where two roads met robbers awaited me, and for the sake of the gold they killed me.

My act of dedication alone I remember ; other than that there is now nothing in me. By the merit of my act I was born in joy-fulfilling heaven.

Behold the merit of fulfilling the Law even for a moment ; and many are envious when they see me shining in glory.

Because of brief instruction, see how heaven is my reward and I am blissful ; whoso will daily follow the Doctrine, I think will attain to peace and immortality.

Great is the reward even of a little action, for great is the fruit of following the Lord's Doctrine. Behold now Chatta who through his merit floods like the sun the earth with brilliance.

"What is Virtue, and how shall we attain it?" Thus men ask when they come together. Now that again I bear a human form, firm in achievement may I live observing the Precepts.

"The Lord is full of loving-kindness and compassion." Thus I remembered all the while [I was being murdered]. Behold me now come to Thy Truth's appellation; be Thou gracious that we may hear Thy Doctrine.

Thus he spoke in thanksgiving, and also to show that there could be no satiety in serving the Lord or in listening to the Doctrine. The Lord observed the angel's desire on behalf of the audience there assembled, and delivered to them a sermon; and finding them receptive He expounded gradually the higher truths.

When the sermon was over, the angel, and his father and mother, obtained the fruit of the First Stage,¹ and the multitude comprehended the Truth.

Established now in the fruit of the First Stage, the angel saw the advantage to his parents if they advanced further on the Path, and with a view to that he thus spoke :

¹ The first of the four great Stages on the Path, that of *Grota-āpatti*, "who has entered the Stream."

Those who cast aside lust and desire for life and delusion,¹ never more at birth shall be imprisoned in a womb. Unto the Peace they go, unto Nirvāṇa.

Thus the angel made known that by accepting the teaching as to the attainment of Nirvāṇa he had achieved the fruit of the First Stage. Then thrice he walked round the Lord in worship, and to His disciples gave due reverence; and taking leave of his parents he returned to heaven.

The Lord arose and departed with His disciples, and the boy's parents and the Brahman Pokkharasāti and all present accompanied Him awhile and then returned. When the Lord arrived at the Jeta Grove, He explained all in full to the assembled Brotherhood. And the assembly received the Discourse with great advantage.

¹ Three "fetters" on the Path; the stage referred to is that of the Anāgāmins, who "do not return", i.e., who become Arahats in that same life.

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Christ and Buddha. A collection of charming tales, told with inimitable grace, which win their way into the hearts of all. Cloth and Gold. As. 12 or 1s. or 25c.

In His Name. Shows how a man of the world, who feels that circumstances prevent him from realising his aspirations, may still live in the world and not be of it. Cloth and Gold. As. 12 or 1s. or 25c.

Flowers and Gardens. An idealistic sketch of a time in the distant future, when the children and the aged shall be the chief objects of humanity's care, and it will be the privilege of men and women to serve them. Cloth and Gold. As. 12 or 1s. or 25c.

What We Shall Teach. Love that is Strength ; Beauty that is Joy ; Action that is Life. "This is what you and I will teach in His Name." Cloth and Gold. As. 12 or 1s. or 25c.

"I Promise": Talks to Some Young Disciples. This little book gives practical advice to the young as to how they shall order their life in youth, in order to become efficient servers in manhood. Cloth and Gold. Re. 1 or 1s. 6d. or 35c.

How We Remember Our Past Lives. Four essays bearing on Reincarnation and the problems which the knowledge of this "Fact in Nature" solves. Cloth. Re. 1 or 1s. 6d. or 35c.

THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

ADYAR ————— MADRAS ————— INDIA